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SUBJECT: SUCCESSFUL EPA WORKSHOP CONCLUDES

¶1. On January 28, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in association with the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement and the Omani Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, concluded two successful one-day workshops in Muscat on the Role of Science in Environmental Law and the Role of Public Participation in Environmental Law. The workshops, funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), brought together 30 environmental professionals from Oman, Algeria, and Morocco to discuss the importance of science and public participation in the formulation of environmental policy. The workshop built upon commitments enshrined in the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation, which is a component of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement.

¶2. Course participants included policy-makers and legal officials from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, and Diwan of Royal Court. Other Omani environmental stakeholders included representatives from the Environment Society of Oman, Oman's only NGO focusing on environmental issues, Occidental Oman, Petroleum Development Oman, and Clean Globe Oman. Dr. Medhi Jaafar, Vice President of Environment Society of Oman and Advisor to the Center for Environmental Research Studies at Sultan Qaboos University, expressed appreciation for the commitment shown by the USG in promoting dialogue among Omani private and public sector officials concerning environmental issues such as pollution prevention and cleaner production methods, environmental impact assessment methods, and public participation in environmental rule-making. "These programs fill crucial holes in public outreach efforts," commented Jaafar. Maisoon al-Riyami, Environmental Inspector for Petroleum Development Oman, noted to Econoff that the ability of the private sector to attend these types of programs was highly beneficial to her work, and praised the quality of the EPA's presentations.

¶3. Comment. The workshop was well-attended, with 27 of the participants coming from Oman alone. The past three EPA-sponsored, MEPI-funded workshops have been well-received by the local community. They serve a crucial role in building both environmental capacity and public discourse within Oman's burgeoning environmental community.  
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